

MEDIA ADVISORY
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Settlement Reached for Victims of Sexual Harassment Acknowledging the Rights of and Harms to Women Working at the Capitol

A settlement has been reached in Marion County over the last couple weeks, finally bringing some closure for many victims of sexual harassment at the Capitol. Both Annie Montgomery and Adrianna Martin-Wyatt, as two of the women who suffered, chose to resolve their individual cases together with other women in unity. Through this process, the women gained strength to share common experiences that were humiliating, distressing and threatened their economic and emotional security.

Three years ago Senator Sara Gelser became a beacon for women when she spoke out and made her first harassment complaint against Senator Jeff Kruse. As she learned the extent of the problem, she has remained steadfast in her conviction to continue to speak out. Because of Senator Gelser and former Commissioner Brad Avakian's commissioner complaint, on January 3, 2019, the Bureau of Labor & Industries (BOLI) found substantial evidence that sexual harassment at the Capitol was severe and pervasive, that given the numerous reports between 2013-2015 that leadership knew or should have known of the culture, that leadership accepted the culture and failed to take meaningful and appropriate corrective action.

It has taken the courage of all of the women who have chosen to not remain silent and to be candid with the press in order to shed a bright light on what has been happening to them at our Capitol. It is because of their collective courage that change can, and hopefully will occur in Oregon. They have been part of an ugly period in Oregon's history, and want to bring closure to this painful chapter in their lives. Annie and Adrianna have chosen to be part of this nonpartisan process to enable the legislature to turn the page. Each is from a different political party and each is hopeful that leadership will move forward working toward a more transparent future fighting against abuses of power and fighting against a culture where of fear of retaliation has dominated.

They hope that by coming forward, their experiences will foster a new environment where the integrity and safety of women are taken seriously, and where they are offered support when harassment occurs. They hope that this settlement helps to shift the power differential at the Capitol to one toward transparency and equality.